

OVERSEAS

THE LONDON TIMES
4 January 1977

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US Air Force general says the Russians are preparing for war

From Fred Emery

Washington, Jan 3

"Worrisome signs" in the Soviet defence build-up are being analysed by American intelligence agencies this year "with a ferocity and intensity" that was missing before, Mr George Bush, the outgoing Director of Central Intelligence, has stated here.

However, Mr Bush declined to confirm repeated and detailed reports that the formal government "national estimate" of Soviet intentions and capability to be inherited by the Carter administration will, for the first time, conclude that the Soviet Union now seeks "superiority" rather than mere "parity" in strategic terms.

In a television interview, which found Mr Bush repeatedly refusing to answer questions about Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operations, the Director said only that "varying opinions" on Soviet strength would be presented to the President and his policy-makers. He angrily denounced any suggestion that the estimate was leaked in order to force Mr Carter's hand against making any cuts in American defence spending.

Mr Bush said he was "appalled" that outside experts, brought in for the first time to run "a competitive analysis" against the CIA's own experts, should have dared leak the results of their supposed "victory" over the CIA men. Of course, by being appalled he was virtually confirming the fact.

Today one of the insiders who must have appalled Mr Bush is quoted in an exclusive interview by *The New York Times*. He believes that the Soviet Union has not only attained superiority already but that it is preparing for war—in which he estimates that 35 to 40 Americans would be killed for every Russian.

General George Keegan, who retired on New Year's Day as Chief of United States Air Force Intelligence, is credited by *The New York Times* with being the driving force behind the grim new "national estimate" of the Soviet Union.

He has long been a maverick in the intelligence community. He has denounced the Salt 1 treaty outlawing anti-ballistic missile (ABM) defences and he predicts the "greatest global conflict in history" within two decades unless there is what he calls a "radical change" in American intelligence perceptions. His views are hotly disputed within the St

General Keegan's alarm is based on his observation of a vast Soviet civil defence nuclear shelter programme, which includes massive stockpiling of foods, he explains in the interview.

He also is alarmed by Soviet plans to introduce 15 new ballistic missile systems by 1982, seven or eight of which he says will be tested by 1978. "By every criterion used to measure strategic balance—that is, damage expectancy, throw weight, equivalent megatonnage or technology—I am unaware of a single important category in which the Soviets have not established a significant lead over the United States", he said.

This is heresy to the Administration. While the Soviet build-up is acknowledged, it is held that the United States is far ahead in the number of nuclear warheads, in deployed Multiple Independently Targeted Re-entry Vehicles (Mirvs), in Cruise missile technology and in guidance systems generally.

General Keegan cited prolific documentation for his views, much of it in open Soviet publications, but also including thousands of photographs, presumably from spy satellites.

On the military side he claimed that the Soviet Union had undertaken a huge "hardening" programme, to reinforce underground military installations against nuclear attack.

These included, he said, headquarters of all the main military services duplicate reserve installations, and those for the entire chain of command for nuclear forces from the general staff down to regiments.

General Keegan called the evidence in the industrial area "equally shocking". He said there were enough mass shelters with the principal manufacturing plants to protect more than 60 million workers from nuclear attack.

He added: "What it all means is that the Soviet believe they can survive a nuclear war, not without, of course, suffering a great deal of damage in the process."

Current American doctrines of deterrence rest upon the tenet that both sides can inflict "unacceptable damage" and that therefore both are deterred. But General Keegan disagrees, not without scorn, for the "civilian academicians and econometricians" who have evolved American strategy. He thinks they do better in the Soviet Union with strategy and force planning "almost exclu-